

Special Edition

**Infection
Prevention
Issue:**

**The Swine Flu:
a teaching
opportunity**



Be prepared, not scared

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says the number of reported cases of swine flu continues to climb, which means that person-to-person spread of the flu could cause a community-level outbreak. But this is no cause for parents to become alarmed. It just means you need to get armed with information on what swine flu looks like and how to prevent it (see insert)

Symptoms of swine flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting. The most important recommendations from experts to parents who suspect that they or a child may have swine flu are to seek a doctor's care and stay at home.

"Absolutely the most important thing you can do is to stay home if you are

not well. Parents need to keep all children with flu symptoms home to help prevent spreading the flu," said Becky Smith, executive director of the American Association for Health Education.

Very sick children — those with a high fever, lethargy, rapid breathing, or any combination of those symptoms — should be taken to their local emergency departments immediately or any urgent care facility to be looked at, experts say. And, because swine flu has multiple symptoms, it is strongly suggested that any child with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher be kept at home as a safety precaution.

If you or a family member has recently travelled to New York; San Diego or Imperial Counties, California;

Swine flu outbreak in the U.S.

As of April 30, 2009, 10:30 AM ET

| States | # of laboratory confirmed cases |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Arizona | 1 |
| California | 14 |
| Indiana | 1 |
| Kansas | 2 |
| Massachusetts | 2 |
| Michigan | 1 |
| Nevada | 1 |
| New York | 50 |
| Ohio | 1 |
| South Carolina | 10 |
| Texas | 26 |
| TOTAL COUNTS | 109 cases |

One death has been confirmed in Texas. Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> for up-to-date information.

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Guadalupe County, Texas, or Mexico, you should take extra care to prevent getting the flu and in watching out for symptoms as those places have reported outbreaks. As of April 28, the CDC reported 64 cases, 45 in New York City. The second largest outbreak in the U.S. is in California, where there have been 10 reported cases

Richard Besser, acting director of the CDC, describes the battle as more of a marathon than a sprint. "Our recommendations, advice, approaches will likely change as we learn more about the virus and we learn more about its transmission," Besser said.

Parents who are concerned are advised to watch their local news to see if reported cases of swine flu have been reported in their community. They are also advised to track general news on the flu because the information on its prevention and its symptoms could change. Local pediatricians, school officials and local health departments are good sources of information. Also, visit www.CDC.gov for the latest news and recommendations on the swine flu nationwide.

Steps for families to take in the home, particularly in regions that have been affected or if they have come in contact with affected persons:

- Make sure family members wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after coughing or sneezing, after using the restroom or before eating a snack or lunch.
- Keep hands away from eyes, nose and mouth when possible.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the nearest trash receptacle.

There are also community strategies that can hold off or lessen the impact of a pandemic until a vaccine is available, the CDC says. Consider a checklist of items you may need, such as prescription drugs, canned goods, plenty of water.

"As you plan, it is important to think about the challenges that you might face, particularly if a pandemic is severe," the agency says. "It may take time to find the answers to these challenges."

Helpful Resources

CDC

- www.cdc.gov/swineflu/

Visiting Nurse Association of America

- www.vnaa.org

World Health Organization

- www.who.int

American Academy of Pediatrics

- <http://www.aap.org/>

Flu prevention toolkit

- www.cdc.gov/flu/toolkit/

Tips from the CDC

- www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm

Who to call:

The CDC hotline: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), Available in English & Spanish. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Safeguard yourself from the swine flu

- Avoid crowds and close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands. If hand washing facilities are not readily available, the use of an alcohol type gel may be employed until hands can be washed with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are easily spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his/her eyes, nose or mouth.
- Use a spray disinfectant on commonly touched surfaces such as telephone handles, bathroom faucets and toilet handles, and kitchen appliance handles and doors.
- Eat a healthy diet, exercise and try to get a full night's rest.

Source: *Visiting Nurse Association of America*